

BELIZE

Travel and Enjoyment Guide



28 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE



INTRODUCTION

Belize, formerly known as British Honduras, gained independence in 1981 and is a tropical paradise just a short journey from the United States. Though it's the only Central American country without a western coastline, Belize's eastern seafront more than makes up for it, with access to the sparkling Caribbean Sea. Here, visitors can explore the Belize Barrier Reef, the second-largest in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage site. Stretching over 190 miles, the reef is a vibrant underwater wonderland filled with colorful corals, tropical fish, sea turtles, and gentle sharks—an adventurer's dream for both snorkelers and divers.

On land, Belize is equally captivating, with its leafy sanctuaries, pristine nature reserves, and ancient Maya ruins like Xunantunich and Caracol that are hidden deep within the rainforest. These iconic archaeological sites offer glimpses into the history of a fascinating civilization, allowing travelers to connect with a past that stretches back thousands of years. The rich landscapes of Belize also provide countless opportunities for adventure, from hiking under towering jungle canopies to exploring mysterious caves and rivers.

Cultural diversity is one of Belize's most endearing qualities. With a population that includes Creole, Maya, Garifuna, Mestizo, and more, Belize is a true melting pot of traditions, languages, and customs. Visitors are encouraged to experience the lively Garifuna drumming, taste traditional dishes like fry jacks and rice and beans, and immerse themselves in the colorful festivals that celebrate the country's heritage. And with English as the official language, communication is effortless, ensuring that all who come to Belize are met with a warm welcome and a deep appreciation of its rich cultural and natural beauty.

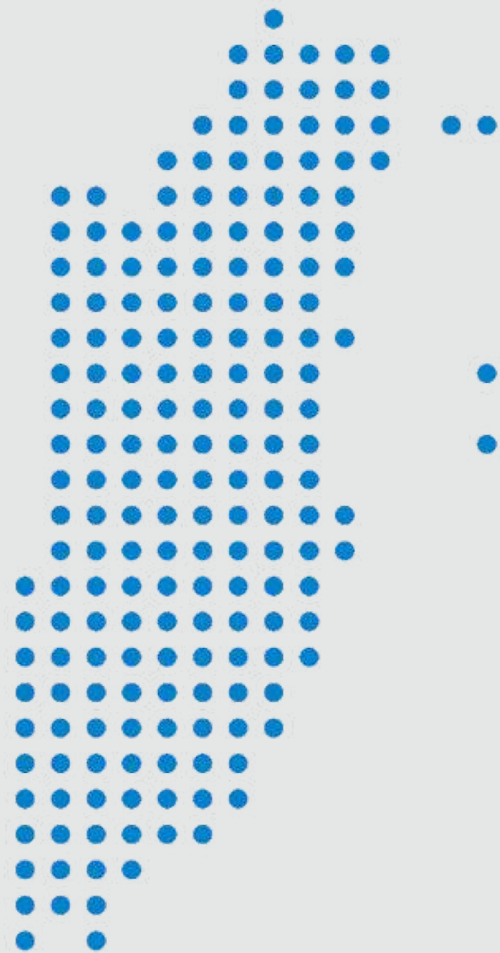


GEOGRAPHY

Belize is the northernmost country in Central America, located along the Caribbean coast. On the north, it borders the Mexican state of Quintana Roo; on the west, the Guatemalan “department” (state or province) of Petén; and on the south, with the Guatemalan department of Izabal.

The Belize Barrier Reef to the east spans approximately 190 miles; it is included within the greater Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System, the second largest in the world, behind only Australia’s Great Barrier Reef. In 1996, the Belize Barrier Reef was deemed a UNESCO World Heritage Site, worthy of international preservation based on its collective interest to humanity.

In total, Belize covers over 14,260 square miles – an area slightly larger than that of nearby El Salvador or Wales, and only slightly smaller than the state of Massachusetts. The country is only 70 miles across and approximately 250 miles long from top to bottom.





DEMOGRAPHICS

Belize is home to an estimated population of around 430,000 people. Despite its size, Belize boasts a rich cultural mosaic, shaped by centuries of migration, trade, and settlement. The population density is relatively low, with most people residing along the coast and in urban centers such as Belize City, Belmopan (the capital), and San Ignacio.

The country's demographics reflect its multicultural heritage. Mestizos, individuals of mixed European and Indigenous ancestry, make up the largest ethnic group, accounting for about 50% of the population. Creoles, descendants of African slaves and European settlers, form the second-largest group, representing around 25%. The Maya, the Indigenous people of Belize, are divided into three main subgroups: the Mopan, Kekchi, and Yucatec. Collectively, they constitute approximately 11% of the population. The Garifuna, descendants of West Africans and Indigenous Carib peoples, contribute another cultural layer, primarily inhabiting southern towns like Dangriga and Punta Gorda.

Belize is also home to smaller communities, including Mennonites of German descent, East Indians, Chinese, Lebanese, and expatriates from North America and Europe. This diverse blend is further enriched by Belize's status as an English-speaking country, with Spanish, Kriol, and several Indigenous languages widely spoken.

Belize's cultural and ethnic diversity is one of its defining characteristics, reflected in its vibrant festivals, cuisine, and traditions.



BELIZE

LANGUAGE

Belize is the only country in Central America where English is the official language, thanks to their heritage as a former British colony. Although it is not necessarily a primary language, with only 5.6% of the population speaking it at home, over 62.9% of the Belizean population reports that they can speak English fluently, with another quarter demonstrating some knowledge of it. With the majority of the population considered bilingual or multilingual, communication should present no obstacles.

Visitors will also hear speakers using Spanish or Kriol (an English-based Creole language similar to Jamaican Patois), languages adopted from the populations who also settled in Belize. The country harbors a small percentage of speakers conversant in German (mainly Mennonites), as well as the three most predominant native Mayan languages: Q'eqchi, Mopan, and Yucatec Maya. Anywhere you go in Belize, you'll be sure to encounter a rich tapestry of interwoven culture and language.

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

Belize is a parliamentary democracy and is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, a constitutional monarchy that recognizes King Charles III of the United Kingdom as its sovereign. Belize borrows both its governmental structure and its legal system from Britain. Its head of state is the reigning monarch, currently King Charles III, represented in local government by a Governor General who must be Belizean. Belize also elects a local Prime Minister who, along with the Cabinet, exercises legal authority. Belize practices universal adult suffrage. All Belizean citizens over the age of 18, or 51.32% of the population, are eligible to vote. Of these, over 91% of eligible voters are actually registered. A General Election takes place every five years.



CURRENCY

The official currency of Belize is the Belize Dollar (BZD), which is pegged to the US Dollar at a fixed rate of 2 BZD to 1 USD. US Dollars are widely accepted throughout the country, often interchangeably with the Belize Dollar. However, smaller establishments and vendors in rural areas may prefer payment in the local currency.

Banknotes are available in denominations of \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100, while coins range from 1 cent to \$1. ATMs are available in major towns and cities, but it's advisable to carry cash when visiting remote areas. Major credit cards like Visa and MasterCard are accepted at hotels, restaurants, and larger businesses, but small shops may operate on a cash-only basis.

LAWS & LEGALITIES

Belize's legal system is based on English common law, a legacy of its colonial past as British Honduras. Laws in Belize are enforced by the Belize Police Department, with the judiciary comprising Magistrates' Courts, the Supreme Court, and the Court of Appeal. For travelers, it's important to note that possession of illegal drugs is a criminal offense. Firearm laws are stringent, requiring permits for any weapon possession.

For expatriates, property ownership is straightforward, as Belize allows foreigners to own land with the same rights as locals. However, engaging a local attorney for due diligence is highly recommended. Laws regarding residency and employment are also structured to facilitate expatriates while ensuring compliance with local regulations.



WHAT TO WEAR

Belize's subtropical climate (average annual temperature: 80° Fahrenheit) necessitates light clothing, often fairly casual. T-shirts and shorts are common attire. Jeans are also acceptable. Informal dress extends even to local nightlife; bars rarely have a stringent dress code for entry. Long pants and long shirts in a breathable fabric such as cotton or linen are the most suitable for trekking through the jungle. Although the mountains are cooler than the surrounding areas, a "cold" day in Belize will rarely go lower than 65° F, so a light sweater or windbreaker will suffice. Of course, a swimsuit (or two) is a must!

TIME ZONE

Belize observes GMT-6:00 hours as its standard time. Belize does not observe Daylight Savings Time (DST). Standard time in Belize is therefore equivalent to U.S. Central Standard Time during non-DST periods, and U.S. Mountain Standard Time during DST periods.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Although visitors from most Caribbean countries, the United States, and the United Kingdom do not require a visa to enter Belize, all infants, children, and adults must provide valid passports and proof of return or onward travel. Additionally, visitors may be asked to show proof of sufficient funds for their stay. Travelers arriving by air will undergo immigration procedures at the airport, while those arriving by land or sea should also carry the appropriate documentation to avoid delays or entry issues.

PHONES

The international country code for Belize is 501, followed by a seven-digit telephone number. The area code for Belize City is 2 and the outgoing code is 00 followed by the country code. For toll-free numbers, the prefix is typically 0-800, followed by a six-digit number.

Cell phone service is available throughout most of Belize through Belize Telemedia Limited, which was nationalized by the government in August 2009 and has the most subscribers to its services than any other provider.

GRATUITY

Tips are often included in the bill. If no service charge is listed, it is customary to pay an additional 10% - 15% of the bill's total.

Outside hotels and restaurants, taxi drivers should be tipped only if they take you on a guided tour or assist you with your luggage. Accompanying tour guides should be tipped a few dollars extra for their services.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

Cash and credit/debit cards are widely accepted. While some businesses may apply a 5% surcharge for using a card, this practice is growing less common. The most commonly accepted cards are MasterCard and VISA. A few restaurants, hotels, and shops may also accept American Express and Discover.





SOUVENIRS

Be sure to pick up traditional Belizean crafts such as Maya jippi jappa baskets, mahogany sculptures, black slate carvings, hammocks, and pottery.

Other Belizean specialties include Hot Mama sauces, which allow any traveler to savor the taste of Belize's beloved hot pepper sauce in their own home. Mayan Secrets is a line of all-natural personal care products with an array of scented oils, lotions, and soaps, all derived from plants, nuts, flowers, and herbs from the local rainforest and packaged in biodegradable boxes and refillable glass bottles.

Belizean shops sell a wide selection of jewelry made with precious stones. Jade, amber, and emeralds are common local luxuries.

DEPARTURE TAX

Visitors exiting Belize by boat from San Pedro, Dangriga, or Punta Gorda are required to pay a fee of \$3.75 USD, which includes a Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) fee.

At land borders, U.S. citizens are required to pay an exit fee of \$15 USD for stays less than 24 hours, and \$18.75 USD for stays over 24 hours.

If leaving through the Philip Goldson International Airport (PGIA), the departure fee is \$55.50 for non-Belizean residents (this must be paid in American dollars). Additionally, a security fee of \$0.75 is charged for domestic security screening.

Suppose you are leaving Belize through the Guatemalan or Mexican border. In that case, the departure fee is \$20 (40 BZD), but when subdivided includes a 30 BZD border exit fee, a 7.50 BZD Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) conservation fee, and a 2.50 BZD land border development fee.

All tourists and non-Belizean citizens are required to pay a \$39.25 USD departure tax when exiting Belize. This tax is often included in the cost of airline tickets; however, travelers should contact their airline in order to verify this.

TRAVEL ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

All visitors to Belize must present a valid passport when entering the country. Driver's licenses and birth certificates are not valid for entry. Passports must be valid for at least nine months following departure. A Belize visitor visa is valid for 30 days.

Nationals of the following countries do not require visas for entry when carrying appropriate identification: Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, United States, Venezuela, and Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member states.

Nationals of the following countries must secure a visa to enter Belize: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Bosnia, Brazil, Central African Republic, Chad, China, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Haiti, Honduras, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Libya, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Nicaragua, Panama, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Ukraine, and Yugoslavia.





CUSTOMS

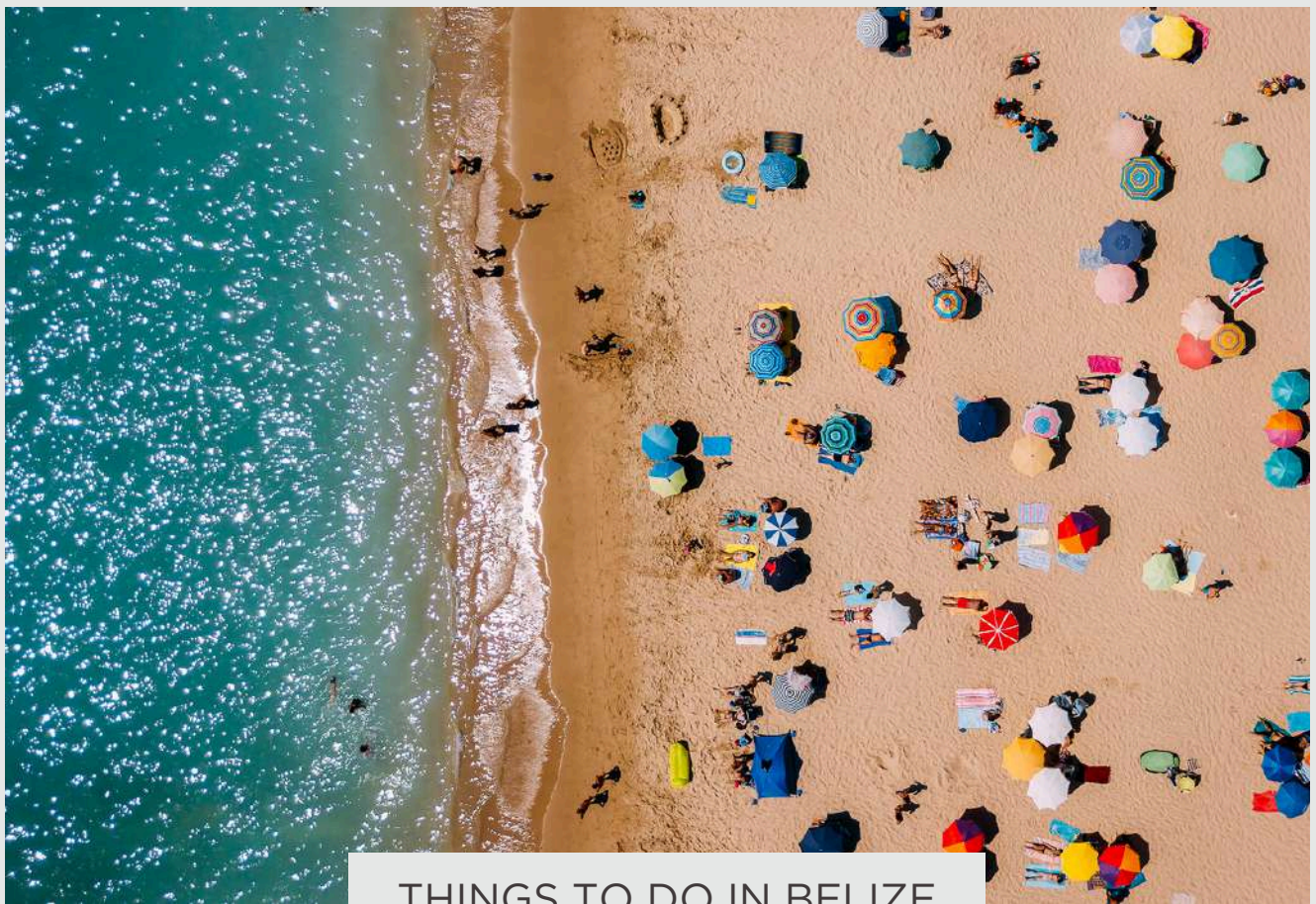
When traveling to Belize, customs regulations are straightforward but important to follow. Visitors are allowed to bring in a reasonable amount of personal items without incurring duties. Alcohol, tobacco, and perfumes are subject to limitations, with duty-free allowances for certain quantities. Agricultural products such as fruits, vegetables, and plants are prohibited to prevent the introduction of pests and diseases. If carrying larger amounts of goods or items for business, visitors may need to declare them at customs. Belize also enforces strict laws on illegal substances, and possession of narcotics can lead to severe penalties, including imprisonment.

EXTENSIONS

Visitors can typically stay for 30 days without a visa. To apply for an extension, you must visit the nearest immigration office before your current permit expires. Any visitor who wishes to remain beyond the given 30-day period must request a visa extension, which is available for a certain fee:

- Up to 6 months: \$25 USD
- After 6 months: \$50 USD per month

Extensions are usually granted for an additional 30 days, though it's not guaranteed. If you plan to stay longer than 60 days, you may need to exit Belize and re-enter to reset your stay, or apply for a longer-term visa, such as a tourist visa or a resident permit, depending on your situation. Residents of certain countries may be eligible for specific visas, which can be inquired about at the Belizean consulate or immigration office. It's important to keep in mind that overstaying your welcome in Belize can result in fines or deportation, so always ensure you comply with immigration regulations.



THINGS TO DO IN BELIZE





BIRDWATCHING

Avid birders will be thrilled by the number and diversity of birds they can encounter in Belize. With nearly 600 species recorded across the country, including parrots, hummingbirds, and the iconic keel-billed toucan, every outing offers a chance for unforgettable sightings. Belize is also a crucial stopover for migratory birds traveling between North and South America, making it a year-round birdwatcher's paradise.

A well-planned birding tour will guide visitors through Belize's varied ecosystems, where each habitat promises its own avian treasures. In the tropical forests, you'll hear the haunting calls of motmots and spot flashes of brilliant blue as they dart through the foliage. Open fields shimmer with flocks of tanagers and meadowlarks, while scrublands and mountain ridges offer glimpses of soaring raptors and elusive trogons. Along the coast and in wetlands, you'll find herons stalking the shallows, flocks of flamingos painting the horizon pink, and pelicans diving gracefully into the sea.

Belize's commitment to protecting its natural heritage is evident in its designation of six Important Bird Areas (IBAs), which are internationally recognized under BirdLife International's global conservation framework. Sites like Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary and Half Moon Caye Natural Monument not only protect critical habitats but also invite visitors to immerse themselves in the beauty and wonder of Belize's avian population.

These protected areas are part of a larger conservation effort that spans the Americas, ensuring the survival of migratory and resident birds alike. Fun fact: Belize's IBAs are not just about birds—many are rich in biodiversity, offering a chance to spot iguanas, howler monkeys, and even manatees as you explore.



HIKING

One of the best ways to explore Belize while appreciating its abundant natural beauty is on foot. Hikers will find countless opportunities throughout the country to trek through lush jungles, dense rainforests, sweeping savannas, thriving wetlands, and picturesque beaches, with each journey offering its own unique sense of adventure. Belize is home to an array of natural trails, many of which are located within its vast network of national parks, nature reserves, and archaeological sites, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the country's unparalleled biodiversity and history.

In the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve, trails wind through pine-covered hills, leading to dramatic sights like the cascading Big Rock Falls or the stunning Rio On Pools, where hikers can cool off in naturally formed swimming holes. The Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, the world's first jaguar preserve, offers miles of well-maintained trails ranging from easy walks to challenging treks. The Victoria Peak Trail, one of Belize's most demanding hikes, rewards adventurers with panoramic views from the country's second-highest point, providing a bucket-list challenge for experienced hikers.

For those seeking a more leisurely experience, trails like those in the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary offer flat, accessible paths through wetlands teeming with birdlife, including the majestic jabiru stork. Coastal hikes, such as those on South Water Caye or Ambergris Caye, combine sandy pathways with breathtaking ocean vistas, where you might spot manatees or stingrays gliding through the crystal-clear waters.

Many trails are dotted with natural and cultural landmarks, from ancient Mayan ruins nestled deep in the rainforest to caves like Actun Tunichil Muknal, where guided hikes blend history, geology, and adventure. With its diverse ecosystems and well-marked trails, hiking in Belize isn't just about the destination—it's about the incredible discoveries you make along the way.



SCUBA DIVING

Belize's reputation as one of the world's premier destinations for divers is well earned. Its signature, bucket-list dive is at the Blue Hole, which reaches over 1,000 feet across and 450 feet deep. However, not all dives are quite so intimidating, and there's a site to suit divers of all levels and interests, whether they want to see fish or sharks, coral, sponges or stingrays.

At The Elbow in Turneffe Atoll, bigger fish are the draw, including barracuda, snapper, and several species of shark. Hol Chan Marine Reserve has grouper, coral, and countless species of smaller tropical fish. For some of the best views of coral, there's also Silk Cayes Canyon just south of Belize City.

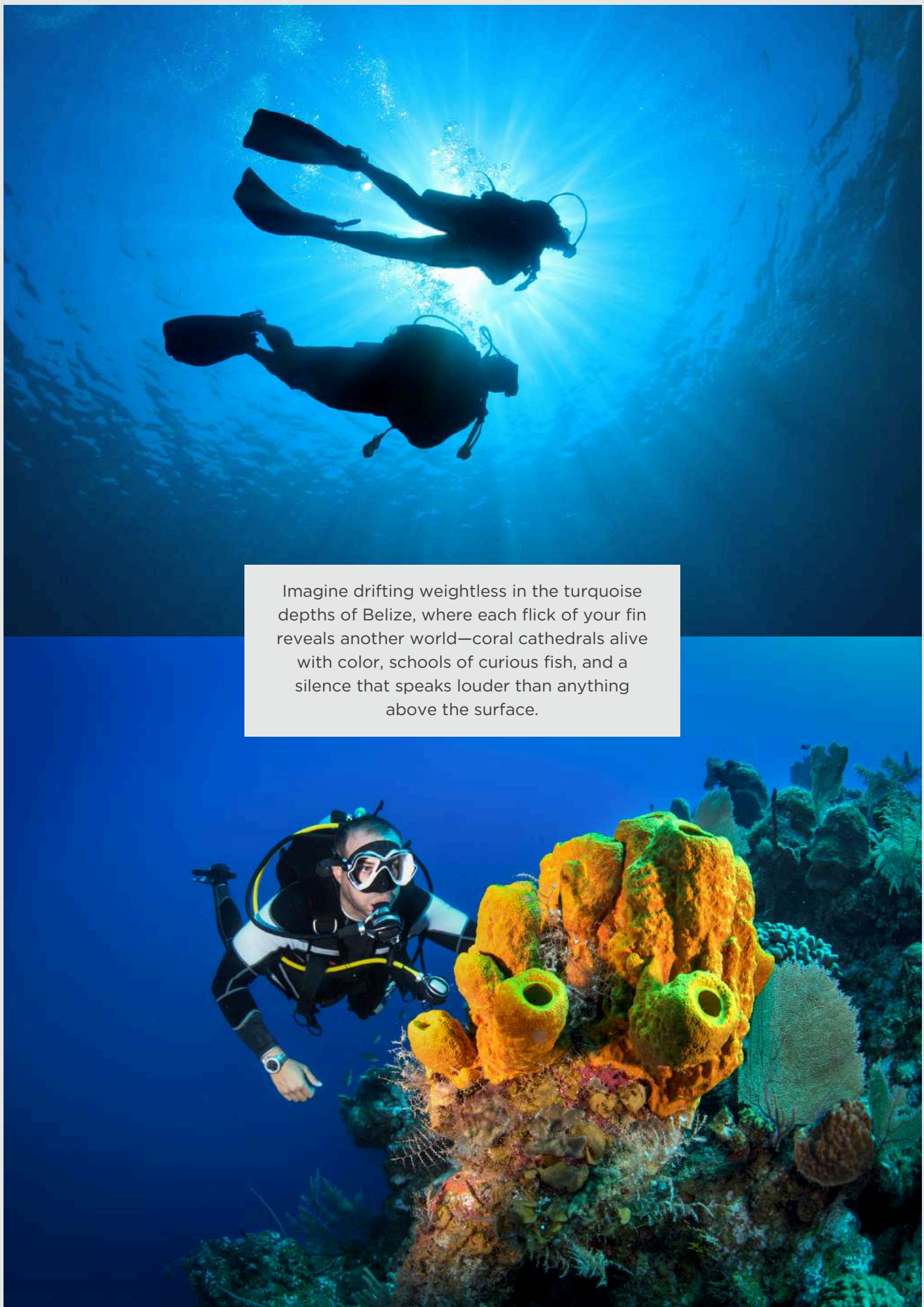
SNORKELING

For those who want to explore Belize's warm tropical waters without the hassle and expense of getting a scuba diving certification, snorkeling is always an option. All snorkeling trips take place offshore, right on the Belize Barrier Reef, in the shallower regions of the atolls.

Ambergris Caye is the most popular starting point for snorkelers, who can mix and match their destinations depending on what they'd like to see. Shark Ray Alley lives up to its name, harboring harmless nurse sharks as well as rays, while Hol Chan and Tres Cocos offer more variety in fish species. Half Moon Caye in the Lighthouse Reef Atoll has a large shallow area perfect for snorkeling, as does Glover's Reef Atoll, which is the best spot to view coral up close.

KAYAKING

Going sea kayaking in Belize is a unique experience, thanks to the calm, warm offshore waters and gentle trade winds. While there are knowledgeable guides available to accompany less experienced paddlers, seasoned kayakers will also be able to rent kayaks to explore on their own.



Imagine drifting weightless in the turquoise depths of Belize, where each flick of your fin reveals another world—coral cathedrals alive with color, schools of curious fish, and a silence that speaks louder than anything above the surface.



RELAX ON BEAUTIFUL BEACHES

Belize is home to some of the most gorgeous and serene beaches in the Caribbean, making it a perfect destination for relaxation. If you're looking for soft, white sand, crystal-clear turquoise waters, or the tranquility of a secluded cove, Belize's beaches offer it all. The water in Belize's beaches is warm and inviting, with an average temperature of about 79-84°F (26-29°C) year-round. It's the perfect temperature for swimming, floating, snorkeling, and other water activities. The gentle warmth of the water provides a soothing experience as you step in, and it feels refreshing without being too hot or too cool.

Ambergris Caye is the most popular beach destination in Belize, known for its vibrant atmosphere and beauty. The island boasts miles of sandy beaches, including those near San Pedro. The views of the Belize Barrier Reef just offshore are breathtaking.

Caye Caulker, a laid-back island south of Ambergris Caye, is perfect for those seeking a more relaxed experience. The island's motto, "Go Slow," sums up the pace of life here. With fewer crowds and tranquil beaches, it's a great spot for beachcombing, swimming, or simply enjoying the sunset.

For those looking for a truly secluded experience, South Water Caye is a small, private island located in the middle of the Belize Barrier Reef. The island's beaches are incredibly pristine, and the surrounding coral gardens make it a haven for snorkelers and divers.

Another beautiful beach destination is Placencia, a long peninsula known for its golden sand and calm waters. The beaches here are perfect for sunbathing, swimming, or enjoying local seafood at one of the beachside restaurants. The nearby Laughing Bird Caye National Park offers both a serene beach and access to rich marine life.



FESTIVALS

Belize has a vibrant calendar of festivals that celebrate its diverse heritage. They offer a unique insight into the country's traditions, music, dance, and cuisine. Here are some of Belize's main festivals that draw both locals and visitors alike.

Carnival (Belize City), celebrated annually in February or March, is one of the most exciting and colorful events in Belize. The streets of Belize City come alive with parades, music, and dancing. Revelers don vibrant costumes and join in the fun, which includes lively soca beats, traditional Belizean foods, and street parties.

Garifuna Settlement Day (November 19) is another key cultural celebration, particularly important for the Garifuna people. This national holiday marks the arrival of the Garifuna people in Belize in 1802. The day is filled with vibrant celebrations that include traditional music, drumming, dancing, and authentic Garifuna food like hudut (fish stew with mashed plantains). The celebration takes place in various towns, with the most notable events happening in Dangriga, the cultural hub of the Garifuna community.

The **Lobster Festival (June)** in San Pedro, on Ambergris Caye, is another popular event for food lovers. The festival marks the start of lobster season, and locals celebrate with a variety of lobster dishes, including lobster tacos, grilled lobster, and lobster ceviche. The festival also features live music, street parties, and games, making it a lively and tasty celebration of Belize's coastal heritage.

St. George's Caye Day (September 10) commemorates the historic 1798 Battle of St. George's Caye, where Belizeans successfully defended their territory against Spanish forces. You can expect parades, traditional music, dance and poetry, boat races, and family picnics with local food.



MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

Cultural enrichment can be found among Belize's many outdoor attractions, if one only knows where to look. Each major city in Belize hosts a handful of well-curated cultural institutions, from museums to art galleries to historic cathedrals.

The Museum of Belize, located in an old prison building in the heart of Belize City, is a small but must-see exhibition of the nation's history, culture, and environment. Friendly, well-informed museum guides are available for pre-booked tours or questions about any of the exhibits. Visitors will also appreciate the air-conditioned interior, complimentary Wi-Fi, and well-stocked gift shop.

St. John's Cathedral in Belize City is the oldest Anglican cathedral not only in Belize but in all of Central America, built by slaves from discarded bricks previously used as ballast in British colonial ships. Inside can be found many original features, including pews carved from local mahogany, stained glass windows, and an antique organ. The adjacent graveyard, Yarborough Cemetery, is the oldest in Belize and was designated a protected archaeological reserve in 2009. Both are open to the public on select days of the week.

Other sites that may be worth visiting depending on your particular interests include the Gallery of San Pedro, the Maya Center Mayan Museum, the Guliisi Garifuna Museum, and the Maya House of Cacao.





MAYAN TEMPLES

Remnants of ancient Mayan civilization can be found throughout Belize. Many of these sites are remarkable for how untouched they remain to this day, with some temples still unexcavated from layers of growth that have hidden them from view over centuries.

In the Orange Walk District, the ruins of Lamanai (from the Maya word for “submerged crocodile”) are buried within an overgrown jungle. Jaguars roam the area and illustrations of them are carved into the temple walls, a testament to how long they’ve been there. Howler monkeys’ screeches are an inescapable part of the local soundscape. Travelers who trust themselves to make the careful climb can ascend to the top of the High Temple, where the view from a hundred feet up is unlike any other in Belize.

Altun Ha is another popular Mayan site, due to its proximity to Belize City. Crocodiles can be found in the original Mayan reservoir, and the surrounding area is home to foxes, raccoons, tapirs, agouti, bats, armadillos, white-tailed deer, and around 200 species of birds. The Jade Head, the largest carved jade object yet discovered from the remains of Mayan civilization, was found at Altun Ha. However, the site may be known best to Belizeans as the illustration on a bottle of Belikin beer.

Caracol is the largest known Maya center in Belize, but one of the most difficult to access today, with only a single access road. It contains Canaa, or “Sky Palace,” the largest manmade structure in Belize, reaching 140 feet high. At its largest and most populous, Caracol covered an area larger than present-day Belize City and was inhabited by over two times the city’s current population.



THINGS TO EAT IN BELIZE





CUISINE

Traditional Belizean food incorporates a blend of Mayan, Mexican, Spanish, and Caribbean culinary traditions. The national cuisine in all its diversity reflects the same kind of cultural blending found among its people.

RICE & BEANS

No Belizean diet is complete without rice and beans, one of the country's staple dishes, which can be consumed for every meal. Red kidney beans and rice are prepared with coconut milk, then served with meat, fish, or vegetables on the side. Potato salad, plantains, and coleslaw are also common accompaniments. Variations on the traditional rice and beans recipe may substitute black-eyed peas for the kidney beans. Rice and beans is not to be confused with beans and rice, in which the rice and beans are cooked separately but served together.

STEW MEAT

Stewing is a popular preparation for chicken, beef, or fish. This technique makes use of recado, a locally beloved spice mix heavily reliant on achiote/annatto. The resulting stew is hearty, flavorful, and richly colored. Stew meat is usually served with rice and beans.

COCONUT

Valued for its versatility the world over, the coconut is a staple of the Belizean diet. In Belize, every single part of the coconut gets put to use, whether for food or for alternative purposes. The most common commercial product to emerge from coconuts is coconut oil, which can be used as a cooking oil or for cosmetic purposes. Coconut water is an everyday beverage and alcoholic mixer, not to be confused with coconut milk, which is produced by squeezing and straining the coconut meat. If you like piña coladas, you can thank coconuts for their invaluable contribution to the tropical cocktail.

The coconut fruit itself is a typical ingredient in many Belizean recipes, both entrees and desserts. Coconut shavings can be mixed into rice, cooked into curries, baked into pies and tarts, frozen into popsicles, or simply eaten fresh from the husk.

Young coconuts have a unique texture, described as soft and almost custardy, that is distinct from the experience of eating a matured coconut.

JOHNNY CAKES

Also known as journey cakes, Belizean johnny cakes are a type of unsweetened bread made with flour and sometimes coconut milk. They are often served for breakfast, either with butter and marmalade or sliced in half and turned into a savory breakfast sandwich with eggs, cheese, and meat.





Belize, where breakfast is more than just a meal—it's a comforting ritual. You tear into a warm johnny cake, its buttery softness giving way to the rich flavors of the Caribbean, or maybe a crispy fry jack, fried to perfection. It's the kind of food that feels like home, even when you're far from yours.

HUDUT

Hudut is a soulful Garifuna creation, where tender fish, often snapper or grouper, is simmered in a creamy coconut milk broth that feels like a warm hug. The mashed plantains are smooth, velvety, and slightly sweet, creating a beautiful contrast with the savory broth. Each spoonful is an explosion of delicate coconut flavor and juicy fish, all wrapped up in the richness of the plantains.

SALBUTES

A popular street food, salbutes are a crispy, golden fried tortilla, warm and light as air, topped with shredded chicken, cool avocado, and a touch of cabbage slaw that adds the perfect crunch. The richness of the avocado, the savoriness of the chicken, and the freshness of the slaw create a perfect harmony.

CONCH FRITTERS

Crispy on the outside, soft and tender on the inside — conch fritters are a delightful bite of Belize's coastal magic. The batter is lightly seasoned, so the conch meat inside shines through with its mild, slightly sweet flavor. As you break through the fritter, you get little bursts of the ocean's flavor with each chew. It's like a coastal breeze captured in a golden fritter, paired perfectly with a tangy dipping sauce to elevate the experience. .

ESCABECHE

This is a traditional Belizean dish made from fried fish (commonly snapper or tilapia) topped with a tangy vinegar-based sauce, with onions, carrots, and bell peppers. The acidity of the sauce helps to balance the richness of the fried fish, making it a flavorful and refreshing dish.





FRY JACKS

Similar to johnny cakes, fry jacks are a fried dough served for breakfast, usually shaped into squares or triangles. They also bear some similarity to New Orleans beignets and Mexican sopapillas. Fry jacks can be served savory or sweet, topped with powdered sugar, jam, beans, or cheese. Often paired with eggs, bacon, or sausage, they make for a hearty and satisfying meal, offering a perfect balance of crispy edges and soft, pillowy centers.

BOIL UP

The most common cultural dish from Belize's Kriol population is boil up, or bile up. This kitchen sink stew combines hard-boiled eggs, fish or pig tail, cassava, sweet potatoes, plantains, carrots, flour dumplings, tomatoes, and whatever other ingredients are on hand all get combined in a single pot. The result is a traditional Belizean dish that's different every time.

SEAFOOD

Belize's proximity to the Caribbean Sea, coupled with its fishing heritage, has made seafood a cornerstone of the country's culinary culture. With some of the best fishing grounds in the world, Belize's waters are teeming with fresh seafood. Lobsters, once considered a luxury, are so abundant here that they've become an everyday delicacy, with a freshly caught lobster costing as little as \$10 on Caye Caulker. This abundance allows for the creation of dishes that showcase the sea's bounty, like ceviche — a dish made by marinating fish, shrimp, octopus, lobster, or conch in tangy lime juice and often spiced with cilantro, onions, and tomatoes. This dish highlights the incredible freshness of the ingredients and is served as a tangy, light snack or appetizer along the coast.

PEPPER SAUCE

Spice, at varying heat levels, is an important component in Belizean cooking. If peppers are not included in a dish, a kick of spice can be added with a local pepper sauce. The most popular brand in Belize is Marie Sharp's, which offers multiple varieties of hot sauce made with locally grown habanero peppers.

INTERNATIONAL CUISINE

As the reputation of Belize as a must-see tourist destination rises, it is not uncommon to see international flavors from Europe and other parts of the Americas being incorporated into the local cuisine. In keeping with the foundation of Belizean cuisine as a melting pot of food traditions, elements of Chinese, Indian, and Nigerian cookery have infiltrated as international people immigrate to Belize. The fusion of these global influences has given rise to unique dishes that blend traditional Belizean ingredients with foreign spices and cooking methods. For example, Chinese stir-fries and Indian curries have become popular additions to local menus, while Nigerian-inspired stews and grilled meats add a rich, savory depth to the culinary scene.





BEVERAGES

The legal drinking age in Belize is 18. Belikin beer is the most popular alcoholic beverage in Belize, though Caribbean and other imported beers are also available in most bars. Decorated with a Mayan temple at Altun Ha on the label, Belikin beer, including Belikin stout and Lighthouse Lager, is a light-bodied beer rich in flavor and typically available for \$2 to \$3 USD.

Bowen & Bowen, the Belizean beverage bottling company, also produces popular Coca-Cola products (including Fanta, Coke Light, and the original Coca-Cola), as well as Guinness Stout.

Belize also manufactures its own rum. Travellers Rum is among the most popular labels, offering both white and gold varieties made with crushed locally grown sugar cane. Bottles of local rum are available in grocery stores, usually priced around \$9 to \$16 USD each.

Belizean vodka and gin are also available, but enjoy far less popularity among locals.

Rum punch is a common accompaniment to many casual Belizean meals, both for lunch and dinner. While recipes vary according to taste and whatever ingredients are available, the standard formula usually includes both white rum and coconut rum and some mixture of fruit juices (orange, pineapple, lime, grapefruit) with grenadine syrup.



WANT TO DISCOVER MORE?

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GET IN TOUCH

PHONE FOR USA/CANADA:
1-800-290-3028

E-mail: [info @ ecidevelopment.com](mailto:info@ecidevelopment.com)

ADDRESS: 2nd Floor, Caye Financial
Centre Cor. Hurricane Street &
Coconut Drive, San Pedro Town,
Ambergris Caye | Belize